

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KATHMA 03498 261120Z

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NP

SUBJECT: KING SEEKS VIEWS OF EX-PRIME MINISTERS ON REFORM

1. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFF TWO EX-PRIME MINISTERS (M.. KOIRALA AND K. N. BISTA) HAVE CONFIRMED REPORTS IN INDIAN PRESS THAT KING GAVE DINNER IN MID-AUGUST TO WHICH HE INVITED SIX OF SEVEN EX-PMS AND SOLICITED THEIR VIEWS ON WHAT, IF ANY, POLITICAL REFORMS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED PRIOR TO CORONATION.

2. ACCORDING TO KOIRALA NO SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS WERE ADVANCED, BUT CONVERSATION SPLIT ALONG RATHER BROAD PHILOSOPHICAL LINES. TULSI GIRI (AND PERHAPS K.I. SINGH) ARGUED AGAINST ANY REFORMS, SAYING THAT CHANGE COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED AND WOULD ONLY LEAD TO SERIOUS EROSION OF MONARCH. AT OTHER END OF SPECTRUM KOIRALA PUSHED FOR COMPLETE REVAMPING OF PANCHAYAT SYSTEM THROUGH INTRODUCTION OF "ONE PARTY RULE," BUT WITH "CLEAR DELINEATION OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY WITH MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE TO DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED LEGISLATURE." REMAINING PMS ARE SAID TO HAVE GENERALLY AGREED ON NEED FOR SOME REFORM OF PANCHAYAT SYSTEM, SUCH AS BROADENING ELECTORAL BASE, OPENING PANCHAYAT TO PUBLIC, AND PERHAPS MAKING PRIME MINISTER RESPONSIBLE TO PANCHAYAT. KING ASKED ALL PRESENT TO PROVIDE WRITTEN VIEWS

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PAGE 02 KATHMA 03498 261120Z

ON SPECIFIC REFORMS.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE FACT OF THE DINNER MAY GIVE HOPE TO THOSE WHO SEEK SOME REFORMS, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT KING WILL ACT ON THE ADVICE HE IS PROVIDED. KOIRALA, FOR HIS PART, SPOKE RATHER BITTERLY ABOUT CURRENT ATMOSPHERE IN PALACE AND SAID BEST THAT CAN BE HOPED FOR IS "COSMETIC REFORM WITHOUT ANY REAL SUBSTANCE." HE SAW KING'S INVITATION AND SUBSEQUENT REQUEST FOR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS AS EFFORT TO OBTAIN ATMOSPHERE OF UNITY IN PRE-CORONATION PERIOD WITHOUT, HOWEVER MAKING COMMITMENT TO ANY CHANGE WHICH WOULD WEAKEN PALACE CONTROL. BISTA, ON THE OTHER HAND, SAID THAT EVEN SMALL REOFRMS, SUCH AS OPENING PANCHAYAT, WOULD HAVE "IMPORTANT AND IMMEDIATE EFFECT" OF REDUCING CORRUPTION AND FORCING PANCHAYAT MEMBERS TO RESPOND TO IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF ELECTORATE.
CARGO

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